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COLLEGE DEGREES

WE need not include in our discussion professional degrees; particularly law, medicine, dentistry, and pharmacy, and we might with almost as much propriety omit the theological degree. Unfortunately our professional degrees do not rest upon the solid basis of a liberal education, and do not deserve the name of higher education. We have very few schools, indeed, that demand any previous preparation for entrance upon these courses. The result is that the instruction received in the professional school can only make men who will be closely imprisoned within the circle of daily routine and business. There seems to be no remedy for this unfortunate state of affairs. While the public interest demands that the professional man should enter upon his studies with better preparation, still the individual demands that he be allowed to take the shortest cut he can to a lucrative profession. It seems to be with us an unwritten law that admission to the different professions shall be absolutely free and unrestricted.

Of regular degrees we shall speak, first, of those given as the equivalent, or the supposed equivalent, of work done in the college or university.

For a long time the B.A. degree has stood for all that is best in culture and education. We insist that its requirements should remain substantially as heretofore. We are not claiming that the traditional amount of Latin and Greek is best for every man. We are not discussing the value of the classics, nor waging war with the man who sees in the scientific curriculum all that is valuable in education; we are not joining issue with the exponent of manual training. It may be altogether advisable to establish a type of education in which the modern languages shall be central. We have no objection to the establishing of such a type, or of any type which its advocates may consider either better or *easier*. What we would insist upon is that the classics shall not be dropped from their central position in the arts course. The classics must remain central in the most complete type of humanistic education, because of their disciplinary and culture value; because through them the finest distillation of the spirit of the old Greeks and Romans is brought to bear upon the temper of the present; because of

their power to vitalize and uplift the spirit of man. We would make it an article of faith that the classics shall never be eliminated from the arts degree. We say this, not because we wish to diagnose men in a lump, as the opponents of the classics claim, and force them all to take the same dose, but because those who insist that the classics are of minor importance ought to make their claim good by building up a distinctive degree. If they can make some other degree represent more than the arts degree does, all right; but if they insist that they must have a certain disease, they ought to be willing to submit to the conventional treatment. Let them make any substitution that they wish, but do not let them lower the ideal.

The great trouble with degrees is that they come from so many different sources and from sources so widely differing, both as to the volume and purity of the stream. Many colleges in Tennessee begin with a, b, c, and leave off with Ph.D. The land is filled with "easy method" institutions and will be so until the end of time. They graduate a fellow in one year, and he has the whole of his after life in which to explain away the disgrace of the thing. The only remedy is an enlightened public opinion. Here, as elsewhere, that great censor must do its work. In the interval, every lover of genuine scholarship must help public opinion by hitting sham whenever and wherever it raises its head.

The eagerness with which honorary degrees are sought is at once pitiful and amusing. Every educator knows of one or more instances of the kind, and it is a fact that in more than one instance there has been a regular sale of such educational green goods.

The number of degrees granted in 1895-6, the latest figures obtainable, excluding those given in law, medicine, and theology, was 10,761, of which number 8840 were conferred upon men. The number of honorary degrees for the year was 755, being 140 less than for the previous year. The degree of doctor of philosophy was conferred as an honorary degree by no less than *sixteen* institutions. This, too, in the face of efforts that have been made to suppress the granting of the Ph.D. as an honorary degree.

At a meeting of the affiliated clubs of graduate students, held at New York City, April 23, 1893, at which representatives of the Cornell, Harvard, and Johns Hopkins graduate clubs were present, steps were taken to secure uniformity in the requirements leading to the doctor's degree. It was decided that the doctor's degree ought to stand for research, all the world over, as it does in Europe; that our higher

institutions practically unite in this requirement. Regret was expressed, however, that some universities confer this degree after an examination on reading pursued *in absentia*, or on studies pursued in residence; while others give honorary Ph.D. degrees, a practice that tends to degrade the degree. It was finally resolved that efforts should be made to bring it about that the doctor's degree should be given only to persons competent to advance knowledge in some department, and trained as resident graduates in some university of high standing. It is gratifying to know that our leading universities have put this degree on the same footing that it has in Europe. Just here, pardon me for saying that it has been for a long time known that Americans could obtain the German doctorate with less trouble than that of Harvard or Johns Hopkins, although it counted for more. The institutional life of the two countries is so different that it is hardly possible for those on different sides of the Atlantic to correctly judge of each other.

One of the best colleges in the East, an institution with a large and generous equipment, and with more than 500 academic students, says: "The degree of Ph.D. will not be conferred by the college at present. In the estimation of the trustees and faculty, the requirements for this degree cannot be properly met where there is not special provision for extended graduate work." This has the right ring to it. Such an institution, you may rely upon it, is not one of the sixteen which grant honorary Ph.D. degrees.

We do not believe that there is a college or university in all the South which ought to think of giving a Ph.D. degree in its course. Let us be honest enough to send a man who wants this work, and is ready for it, to a place where he *can* get it.

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